Document title	Draft revised project proposal for updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II), 2022-2024
Code	6-11
Category	DEC
Agenda Item	6 - Matters arising from the HELCOM Groups
Submission date	16.11.2021
Submitted by	Executive Secretary

Background

Regularly reviewing the status of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes enables the tracking of long-term trends in the status of Baltic Sea biodiversity and shows changes in the status of species and habitats/biotopes. This enables assessing whether actions taken to halt the loss of biodiversity have been effective. Together with other HELCOM assessments, such as e.g. the State of the Baltic Sea report and the Pollution Load Compilation, the HELCOM Red Lists represent an essential part of the HELCOM evaluation system, enabling responsive, dynamic and adaptive management and measures.

The draft project description for review and update of the HELCOM Red List of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes for the time period of 2022-2024 is included in this document. Full funding for the project has been secured from the HELCOM budget. The project description has been elaborated to strive to ensure synergies with other HELCOM processes and to feed into other ongoing or planned work under State & Conservation and under other international commitments. Updating the HELCOM Red List assessments is in line with several existing HELCOM commitments on threatened species and biotopes/habitats (see Annex 1). In addition, the work is instrumental in implementing several of the actions included under the 2021 Baltic Sea Action Plan.

The planned project aims to produce updated Red Lists of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes. The planned work has been based on the outcomes and lessons learned in the previous HELCOM Red List project, finalized in 2013. Efforts have been made to elaborate a project description limiting the required resources for the work from the Contracting Parties and nominated experts, utilizing recently updated IUCN assessment guidelines and tools (see Annex 2) as well as utilizing tools, infrastructure and resources which have become available in the interim since the 2013 Red lists were produced. This includes the updated Checklist of Baltic Sea macrospecies 2.0 published in 2020 and the HELCOM Biodiversity Database (BioBase) which enables possible automatization of a part of the assessment work.

HOD 60-2021 highlighted the importance of the work, provisionally approved the draft project, pending securing funding of the work, and invited the Secretariat and the State and Conservation Working Group to further elaborate the project description with the aim of submitting a finalized draft to HOD 61-2021 for final approval.

The meeting expressed concern regarding the workload and availability of national experts and took note of the comments by Finland that as far as possible existing HELCOM groups should be utilized for the work.

In response to this the timeline for the planned work has been shifted by six months to move the expert workload further from the period under the HOLAS III assessment where the highest intensity of workload for national experts is expected. This shift still enables meeting the deadline of 2024, as set out in the updated BSAP. Exploring the possibility for, and possible resource implications of, utilizing the Swedish Red List assessment tool Edit for regional purposes has indicated that Edit can be used for producing the initial regional assessment for species, significantly diminishing the workload compared to the 2013 project. In

order to optimize the use of Edit calculations for Area of Occupancy (AOO) and Extent of Occurrence (EOO), two of the most influential IUCN criteria, are needed for each species. As this has in the past proven to be a time-consuming process the possibility to develop a regional tool which produces the calculations, as well as the underlying maps, has been explored and seems fully feasible using the infrastructure developed under the HELCOM Biodiversity Database (BioBase). Such a tool would both significantly reduce the workload and provide highly valuable input to the expert review and ultimately the Species Information Sheets. Both the use of Edit and the development of a tool for calculation of EOO/AOO have been included in this project outline. It should be noted that Edit can only support the work for species assessment. For biotopes and habitats other tools to facilitate the work will be explored.

STATE & CONSERVATION 15-20221 welcomed that full funding for the project has been secured from the HELCOM budget, considered the further elaborated project description and endorsed it to be submitted to HOD 61-2021 for final approval.

After STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021 the project proposal has been further amended by the addition of agreed modifications to the assessment tool EDIT to be carried out by Sweden, specification of modification needs to the BalMar tool and a review of possible additional habitats/biotopes to HUB. The Secretariat is also in the process of clarifying the possibility of the BalMar tool to include automated processing of habitat and species data into HUB categories with the subcontractor, in line with the STATE&CONSERVATION 15-2021 outcome.

For further extracts from relevant meetings please see Annex 3. The project plan entails hiring a full-time Project Coordinator as well as a part-time Project Researcher and a few months of working time from a developer to produce a regional tool for AOO and EOO calculations.

Action requested

The Meeting is invited to approve the further elaborated project description for updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II), 2022-2024.

DRAFT Project description for reviewing the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes

1. Title of Project

HELCOM project for reviewing and updating the threat status of species and habitats/biotopes in the Baltic Sea (HELCOM RED LIST II) 2022-2024

2. Project Manager(s)

Project Coordinator will be hired by the Secretariat for the whole 2-year time period.

3. Proposing Party

Contracting Party _____

Commission _____

Subsidiary body __X___

Heads of Delegation _____

Executive Secretary _____

4. The body supervising the project

State and Conservation Working Group and Professional Secretary.

5. Target and activities

The aim of the suggested project is to review the status of red-listed species and red listed habitats/biotopes in the Baltic Sea, based on the outcomes and lessons learned by the previous HELCOM Red List project finalized in 2013 and utilizing the updated HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea macro species 2.0.

Regularly reviewing the status of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes will enable the tracking of long-term trends in the status of the Baltic Sea biodiversity and show changes in the status of species and habitats/biotopes. This will, for example, enable assessing whether actions taken to halt the loss of biodiversity have been effective.

Repeated iterations of the work bring many benefits, such as:

- a difference in results can be visible for short-lived species
- knowledge gaps are filled when assessments are carried out regularly
- continuity of the work is ensured with more frequent assessments
- enables following of changes in the status
- the possibility to stay up to date in comparison to the work done globally, to IUCN recommendations and to work done nationally
- the results of the Red List of species work being available to the large number of other work strands utilizing it
- In general work on the regional level would ensure better assessments in relation to biogeographic boundaries

Like all HELCOM assessments, an updated Red List assessment functions as an integral part of keeping track of the progress and effectiveness of HELCOM commitments and can help to increase the effectiveness and efficiency of measures by targeting areas or species identified to be of priority. The Red List is intrinsically linked to a broad set of commitments, both within HELCOM and beyond, and would provide relevant information for assessing the fulfillment of the updated HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan, HELCOM Recommendations 37-2 and 40-1, as well as a number of Recommendations targeting relevant species directly, commitments under the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and UN Sustainable Development Goals (see Annex 1 for an overview).

An updated assessment of the Red List of species and habitats/biotopes would provide a reference point for those CPs not currently planning Red List work, as a regional assessment shows the trend of the assessed species and habitats/biotopes throughout its distribution, not only in the areas in which new data has been collected, and incorporates increased understanding of the assessment procedure overall, as well as of other linked parameters, in addition to any available new data. Based on the current knowledge gaps and needs, assessments for macrophytes and benthic invertebrates on a HELCOM level is much needed.

The results from an updated Red List are also a prerequisite to addressing other related topics, such as MPA related assessments, possible effects of climate change, and ecosystem services etc.

Resource requirements

In comparison to the previous RED LIST project a number of resources are now available which were not available in 2010-2013, including technical tools, infrastructure, and guiding material. It is the intention to utilize these resources as much as possible to facilitate the work. Effort has been made to elaborate a project that would require a minimum of resources for the work on the part of the Contracting Parties and nominated experts, based on the experience of the previous Red List project. The main bulk of the assessment workload will be on the Project Coordinator, with State and Conservation approving collated guidelines and procedures and the final products.

National expert participation is expected in relation to data submission, reviewing and approving preliminary results, workshop participation and, should any inconsistencies be identified in the initial assessment, to approve the amended results remotely (the amendments will be done by the Project Coordinator/project researcher based on instructions from the workshop) as well as to review and, if necessary, provide information to update the Species and Habitat Information Sheets. Wherever possible work will be conducted online.

National participation is proposed to take the form of topical task teams, aligned with the groupings in the Red Lists, which will function as the main national contact point for matters related to their respective topics. In addition, the plan presented in this document includes the involvement of preexisting networks within HELCOM in conjunction with national experts nominated specifically for the RED LIST II work.

Red List of Species

Task teams:

- Red list task team for Macrophytes (TT MACRO)
- Red list task team for Benthic Invertebrates (TT BI)
- Red list task team for Fish and Lamprey (TT FISH)
- Red list task team for Seabirds (TT BIRDS)
- Red list task team for Marine Mammals (TT MM)

IUCN material

Since the end of the previous HELCOM RED LIST project in 2013, IUCN has progressed significantly in the process of considering the regional assessment approach. This includes the ArcGIS IUCN Red List Species Mapping Toolbox and the EOO calculator. Work planned under the review would entail pre-assembling guidelines, prepared prior to the Red List assessment work, utilizing the updated and refined guidelines from IUCN (see Annex 2).

Use of the Swedish assessment tool EDIT

The Swedish Red List assessment tool EDIT, that follows the IUCN guidance, can be used in the HELCOM Red List species assessment, after modifications regarding taxonomic compatibility, and language are applied. These modifications will be carried out by Sweden before the start of the assessment work (during Q3 of 2022. The intention is that available assessment results exported from EDIT will be further evaluated and validated by the experts involved. The current tool EDIT is similar to the one used to assess some species groups within the previous HELCOM Red List assessment (AVA), allowing for a consistent comparison of results.

HELCOM tools and infrastructure

The updated HELCOM Checklist of Baltic Sea macrospecies (published in 2020) will facilitate the Red List assessment (e.g. via data availability and storage, possibility to query the data, and the potential to use digital tools for part of the assessment process etc.) and the observation data are readily available also via the HELCOM Biodiversity Database (BioBase). BioBase provides infrastructure lacking during the previous RED LIST project and offers the possibility to automate a significant part of the assessment work, which in turn positively affects the resource requirements.

In order to optimize the use of EDIT (see section above) calculations for Area of Occupancy (AOO) and Extent of Occurrence (EOO), two of the most influential IUCN criteria, are needed for each species. As this has in the past proven to be a time-consuming process the possibility to develop a regional tool which produces the calculations, as well as the underlying maps, has been explored and seems fully feasible using the infrastructure developed under the HELCOM

Biodiversity Database (BioBase). Such a tool would both significantly reduce the workload and provide highly valuable input to the expert review and ultimately the Species Information Sheets.

Data reporting

BioBase also provides vital infrastructure for reporting, storing and querying data to support the assessments, as well as providing agreed data formats, preliminary quality checks of reported data and a way to ensure direct links with the World Register of Marine Species (WoRMS). Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have recently updated their national red lists. According to a questionnaire circulated for the Red List Workshop 1-2017, most species groups were to be completely or partially assessed by several countries by 2020, and it was expected that new data would become available through the national processes for the majority of the species groups by the end of 2020. This presents an opportunity to align the national and regional work and benefit from the national work as basis for the HELCOM review and should facilitate data reporting.

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating the database, as a basis for the assessment, as well as the approval of the reported data (see under *7. Timetable*).

The timing of the project would enable synergies with HOLAS III with regards to data reporting, with many of the species data strands already included in the HOLAS III data call and thus minimizing the resource requirements for data reporting under the RED LIST II project. In addition to species data, information on e.g. pressures and human activities etc. highly useful for supporting information such as Species Information Sheets (SIS) will be readily available from the HOLAS III process.

Red List of Habitats and Biotopes

Task teams:

- Red list task team for Benthic Habitats and Biotopes (TT BHB)
- Red list task team for Pelagic Habitats and Biotopes (TT PHB)

Improving HUB classification

In order to review and possibly fill gaps in the HUB classification, the data will need to be processed using the BalMar tool, which is foreseen to be a task subcontracted to consultants who supported the HELCOM RED LIST project 2013 and are thus familiar both with the process and the tool.

In order to increase the precision of the habitat/biotope classification, creating conversion factors to convert biovolume values of benthic fauna to biomass values for use in the BalMar tool is proposed. This would allow for example to differentiate the biotopes dominated by barnacles (*Balanus improvisus*) and those dominated by blue mussel (*Mytilus edulis*) thus allowing for these biotopes to be classified on a more precise level. This adjustment would allow for benthic habitats characterised by epibenthic fauna be classified at the same level as benthic habitats characterised by vegetation (which are based on biovolume values that are more easily available than biomass values).

IUCN material

Since the end of the previous HELCOM RED LIST project in 2013, IUCN has progressed significantly in the process of considering the regional assessment approach as well as the assessment guideline for ecosystems. Work planned under the review would entail pre-assembling guidelines, prepared prior to the Red list assessment work, utilizing the updated and refined guidelines from IUCN (see Annex 2).

Other supporting material

Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have in recent years prepared updated national red list assessments and, in this process, included the assessment of habitats and biotopes. Where the IUCN Guidelines for assessment of ecosystems and the HUB categorizations have been utilized to do this work (e.g. Finland) much of the national work is directly or indirectly transferable to the regional level, e.g. the establishment of descriptions of collapse for individual habitats and biotopes. This is a valuable resource and can be used as a basis for regional level work.

HELCOM tools and infrastructure

The HELCOM Map and Data Services (MADS) can be used to display and grid the collated maps stemming from the national habitats data.

Data reporting

MADS also provides vital infrastructure for reporting and storing data to support the assessments, as well as providing agreed data formats. Several of the HELCOM Contracting Parties have recently prepared national habitats and biotopes mapping data using the HUB classification, supporting access to comparable spatial information from several parts of the Baltic. This presents an opportunity to align the national and regional work and benefit from the national work as basis for the HELCOM review and should facilitate data reporting.

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating MADS, as a basis for the assessment, as well as the approval of the reported data (see under *7. Timetable*).

The timing of the project would enable synergies with HOLAS III with regards to data reporting, in the case of habitats and biotopes potentially providing improved information for the HOLAS III assessments and analyses, e.g. for spatial distribution of ecosystem component, provisioning of ecosystem services and ecosystem accounting. In addition to species data, information on e.g. pressures and human activities etc. highly useful for supporting information such as Habitat Information Sheets (HIS) will be readily available from the HOLAS III process.

6. Expected results

Red List of Species

The project is expected to produce updated assessments of Red listed species (macrophytes, benthic invertebrates, fish and lamprey, birds, and marine mammals) in the HELCOM area, based on the previous HELCOM Red List assessments finalized in 2013 and the updated Checklist of Baltic Sea macro species, published in 2020, as well as reviewed and, where needed, updated Species Information Sheets.

Red List of Habitats and Biotopes

The project is expected to produce updated assessments of Red listed habitats/biotopes in the HELCOM area, based on the previous HELCOM Red List assessments finalized in 2013, as well as a review and, where identified based on new data, improvement of the underlying HUB classification to support the assessment.

7. Consistency with HELCOM priorities

__X__ yes ____ no

Please see Annex 1 for reference.

8. Preliminary Timetable (including number of Project Team meetings)

The following table presents the general overview of the suggested work process, orange-colored cells: Work stages involving contributions by CPs, light blue colored cells: species, mid-blue colored cells: habitats/biotopes, dark blue colored cells: both species and habitats/biotopes related work.

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for any species data not already included in HOLAS III data reporting										
Populate database with any new species data										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed on assessment of species		S&C								
Online review of species data										
Edit the Swedish assessment tool EDIT to ensure it operates in English and harmonize the taxonomy with the HELCOM biodiversity database, carried out by Sweden										
Develop a regional tool for AOO and EOO calculations										
Prepare and provide species datasets for initial assessment										
Run initial species assessments using EDIT										
Review initial species assessment results										
Back-to-back species workshops (see details below)										
Any needed corrections to species assessments										
Review of any changed species assessments										

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Preparation on updated SIS for review										
Online review of SIS										
Data call for data on distribution of habitats and biotopes										
Merge information into regional habitat and biotope distribution maps										
Identify any spatial gaps in coverage for habitats and biotopes distribution information										
Address gaps in coverage of habitat and biotope distributional information, where possible										
Updating the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB										
Improving HUB by including additional biotopes based on new data (filling gaps)										
Review of the possible additional biotopes in HUB										
Populate MADS with new habitat and biotope data and maps										
Workshop on pelagic habitat assessment approach										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed for habitats and biotopes		S&C								
Online review of habitat and biotope data and maps										
Review the existing proposals for habitat/biotope collapse descriptions under IUCN criteria C										
Workshop to prepare and agree on use of IUCN criteria C, including setting collapse descriptions where these are not available.										
Run initial assessments										
Review initial assessment results										
Workshop to review result of habitats and biotopes assessment										
Any needed corrections to habitats and biotopes assessments										
Review of any changed habitats and biotopes assessments										
Preparation on updated HIS for review										
Online review of HIS										
Wrap up (any remining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)										
Approval of report										S&C
Publication and launch of all material										

Red List of Species

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for any species data not already included in HOLAS III data reporting										
Populate database with any new species data										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed on assessment of species		S&C								
Online review of species data										
Edit the Swedish assessment tool EDIT to ensure it operates in English and harmonize the taxonomy with the HELCOM biodiversity database, carried out by Sweden										
Develop a regional tool for AOO and EOO calculations										
Prepare and provide species datasets for initial assessment										
Run initial species assessments using EDIT										

Review initial species assessment results										
Back-to-back species workshops (see details below)										
Any needed corrections to species assessments										
Review of any changed species assessments										
Preparation on updated SIS for review										
Online review of SIS										
Wrap up (any remining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)										
Approval of report										S&C
Publication and launch										

It is perceived that five back-to-back workshops will be needed to address possible comments and come to an agreement on the assessment results:

1. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for macrophytes.
2. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for benthic invertebrates.
3. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for fish and lamprey (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM FISH-PRO and HELCOM Fish Group)
4. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for seabirds (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM/OSPAR/ICES joint working group on birds)
5. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for marine mammals (could be carried out in coordination with HELCOM EG MAMA)

Red List of Habitats and Biotopes

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Data call for data on distribution of habitats and biotopes										
Merge information into regional habitat and biotope distribution maps										
Identify any spatial gaps in coverage for habitats and biotopes distribution information										
Address gaps in coverage of habitat and biotope distributional information, where possible										
Updating the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB										
Improving HUB by including additional biotopes based on new data (filling gaps)										
Review of the possible additional biotopes in HUB										
Populate MADS with new habitat and biotope data and maps										
Workshop on pelagic habitat assessment approach										
Updated guidance material collated, and regional approach agreed for habitats and biotopes		S&C								
Online review of habitat and biotope data and maps										
Review the existing proposals for habitat/biotope collapse descriptions under IUCN criteria C										
Workshop to prepare and agree on use of IUCN criteria C, including setting collapse descriptions where these are not available										
Run initial assessments										
Review initial assessment results										
Workshop to review result of habitats and biotopes assessment										
Any needed corrections to habitats and biotopes assessments										
Review of any changed habitats and biotopes assessments										
Preparation on updated HIS for review										

	2022		2023				2024			
Task	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Online review of HIS										
Wrap up (any remining updates, report, updating website and making content accessible)										
Approval of report										S&C
Publication and launch										

6. Expert workshop on considering approach for inclusion of pelagic habitats in the assessment (possibly utilizing the discussions and synergies on pelagic assessment under HOLAS III)
7. Expert workshop on agreeing on descriptions for habitat/biotope collapse under Criteria C (possibly in cooperation with EN BENTHIC)
8. Expert workshop on reviewing the initial Red List results for habitats/biotopes (possibly in cooperation with EN BENTHIC)

9. Budget (taking into account financial year from 1 July to 30 June)

8.1 Total Costs

The planned two and a half years would require an estimated 202.000 euros of funding.

This is intended to be divided as follows:

- 30 person-months for a full-time Project Coordinator (located at the Secretariat) to cover the review of Red List of species and habitats/biotopes.
- 18 person-months for project researcher to assist the Project Coordinator with running the initial assessments and taking part in the workshops for reviewing the initial results.

Year	Total/activity
Project Coordinator (at Secretariat)	120.681
Project Researcher (at Secretariat)	63.632
Analysis tool, data processing (at Secretariat)	7.802
Subcontracting (updating and running the BalMar tool to fill gaps in HUB)	10.000
Workshops	No additional cost
Product finalization (report editing etc.)	No additional cost
Total	**202.115**

10. Additional requests (manpower, equipment, facilities, etc.)

10.1 From the Contracting Parties

The Contracting Parties are requested to provide data for populating the database and MADS, as a basis for the assessment, inform on national approaches to habitat and biotope assessment, as well as expert participation in the suggested task teams and workshops to review and approve data and review assessment results (see under *7. Timetable*). As highlighted by STATE & CONSERVATION 14-2021 it is important that a clear lead is assigned for each task team, and in accordance with this Contracting Parties are invited to consider nominating a lead for one or several of the Task Teams.

10.2 From the Secretariat

The Secretariat will ensure coordination of the project with other planned and ongoing HELCOM processes, dissemination, and information flow as well as facilities and equipment needed for the work.

11. Procedure of nomination of the Project team members

Project coordinator and researcher will be employed by the Secretariat. The Contracting Parties are invited to nominate national experts for the seven task teams:

- Red list task team for Macrophytes (TT MACRO)
- Red list task team for Benthic Invertebrates (TT BI)
- Red list task team for Fish and Lamprey (TT FISH)
- Red list task team for Seabirds (TT BIRDS)
- Red list task team for Marine Mammals (TT MM)
- Red list task team for Benthic Habitats and Biotopes (TT BHB)
- Red list task team for Pelagic Habitats and Biotopes (TT PHB)

Nomination can preferably align with national representation in the respective HELCOM Expert Groups, however, official nomination is recommended, to ensure clear mandate and expectation of workload.

12. Signature of the Project Manager(s)

13. Opinion of the Chairs of the relevant body

14. Opinion of the Executive Secretary

15. Decision of the Heads of Delegation

(Reference is to be given to the relevant Outcome of the Heads of Delegation's Meeting)

_____ to establish ____not to establish

Annex 1. HELCOM commitments to work on threatened species

HELCOM has committed to working on threatened species both on a broad and specific scale. Below are excerpts of current HELCOM commitments that directly affects or supports the topic of threatened species and/or habitats and biotopes:

Copenhagen Ministerial declaration 2013

1 (K). *WE AGREE to develop regional assessments jointly and in such a way that they can be used by the Contracting Parties in assessments of their marine and coastal waters, as well as for their reporting purposes under EU MSFD and other international frameworks, and WE AGREE to start implementing the revised HELCOM Monitoring and Assessment Strategy immediately, including:*

e. to make the Red List assessments of Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes a regular activity which will enable the tracking of long-term trends in the status of the Baltic Sea biodiversity;

4 (B). *WE DECIDE to implement on a regional level the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity for the 2011- 2020 period of the UN Convention of Biological Diversity, including the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, taking into account the special characteristics of the Baltic Sea, bearing in mind that the implementation of the Plan in the EU and its Member States is carried out through the EU Biodiversity Strategy, and more specifically DECIDE to…. take measures so that by 2020, regionally, the loss of all red listed marine habitats and biotopes in the Baltic Sea will be halted and they have largely recovered, and that degradation and fragmentation have been significantly reduced, the progress of which will measured with a core indicator to be produced; develop by 2015 a new HELCOM Recommendation on conservation plans for species, habitats and biotopes which are at risk of extinction*

Helsinki Convention

Article 15 of the 1992 Helsinki Convention requiring the Contracting Parties to take all appropriate measures to conserve and protect biodiversity of marine and coastal areas.

Proposed actions for the updated Baltic Sea Action plan:

Topic: Red listed species

BE36a To update the HELCOM Red List Assessments by [2024], including identifying the main individual and cumulative pressures and underlying human activities affecting the red listed species.

BE37a/ BE38a/ BE39a By [2025] develop, and by [2027] implement, and enforce compliance with, ecologically relevant conservation plans or other relevant programmes or measures, limiting direct and indirect pressures stemming from human activities for threatened and declining species. These shall include joint or regionally agreed conservation measures for migrating species.

BE40a Develop tools for, and regularly assess, the effectiveness of other conservation measures for species, besides MPAs, the first assessment to be done by [2025] as well as assess effect on species through risk- and status assessments by [2029].

Topic: Red listed habitats and biotopes

BE36b Update the HELCOM Red List Assessments by [2024], including identifying the main individual and cumulative pressures and underlying human activities affecting the red listed biotopes and habitats.

BE37b/ BE38b/ BE39b By [2025] develop, and by [2027] implement, and ensure compliance with, ecologically relevant conservation plans or other relevant programmes or measures, limiting direct and indirect pressures stemming from human activities for threatened and declining biotopes and habitats.

BE40b Develop tools for, and regularly assess, the effectiveness of other conservation measures for habitats and biotopes, besides MPAs, the first assessment to be done by [2025] as well as assess effect on biotopes and habitats through risk- and status assessments by [2029].

HELCOM Recommendations

Recommendation 17/2 Protection of Harbour Porpoise in the Baltic Sea Area

Recommendation 27-28/2 Conservation of seals in the Baltic Sea Area

Recommendation 19/2 Protection and Improvement of the Wild Salmon (*Salmo salar* L.) populations in the Baltic Sea Area

Recommendation 32-33/1 Conservation of Baltic Salmon (*Salmo salar*) and Sea Trout (*Salmo trutta*) populations by the restoration of their river habitats and management of river fisheries

Recommendation 34E-1 Safeguarding important bird habitats and migration routes in the Baltic Sea from negative effects of wind and wave energy production at sea

Recommendation 37/2 Conservation of Baltic Sea species categorized as threatened according to the 2013 HELCOM red list

THE COMMISSION:

BEING DEEPLY CONCERNED about the alarming situation of Baltic Sea species being in danger of becoming extinct, i.e. those categorized as "critically endangered", "endangered" or "vulnerable" according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List and termed "HELCOM threatened species" hereafter,

RECALLING HELCOM Recommendations aiming at the protection and conservation of specific (groups of) Baltic Sea species, in particular Recommendations 17/2, 27-28/2, 34E-1, 19/2 and 32-33/1,

2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan to improve the conservation status of threatened and/or declining species of the Baltic Sea area by 2015 (including specific agreements regarding fish and lamprey species), and the goal to achieve a favorable conservation status of all species by 2021,

EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets, specifically Aichi Target 12 to prevent extinction of threatened species and improve and sustain their conservation status, and Aichi Target 6 to put in place recovery plans and measures for depleted species and that fisheries shall have no significant adverse impacts on threatened species, both to be met by 2020,

Contracting Parties being also EU Member States, have to coordinate their activities regarding threatened species with the implementation of relevant EU Directives, such as the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), and the Common Fisheries Policy as relevant,

HELCOM threatened species can be associated, inter alia, with "biological features" according to Annex III Table 1 of the MSFD and thus, their protection and conservation contributes to the MSFD objective of achieving Good Environmental Status of EU marine waters by 2020,

RECOMMENDS that the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention take necessary measures to improve the status of HELCOM threatened species according to the 2013 HELCOM Red List and reduce the number of red listed species, herewith also working towards the goal to achieve a favorable conservation status of all species by 2021, and to carry out the following steps:

2. Consider the possibility to introduce and/or update national legislation or, if more appropriate, choose different kinds of instruments (such as incentives, administrative actions or negotiated agreements), to provide for effective protection of relevant HELCOM threatened species in all their life stages in the Baltic Sea sub-regions where they are threatened.

3. Consider including HELCOM list of threatened species in EIA procedures in order to mitigate or limit pressures or impacts inflicted on threatened species with the aim to:

3.1. Receive and share knowledge about the occurrence of such species,

3.2. Get a documentation of the human induced pressures and/or impacts,

3.3. Be in a position to decide on appropriate measures to avoid or limit and mitigate the relevant pressures and/or impacts,

8. Improve the exchange of data on HELCOM threatened species between HELCOM and other international and national bodies that produce or use similar data in order to create synergies, and therefore:

8.1 Consider improving data by regular systematic investigations and/or monitoring of the abundance, distribution, diversity and ecology of HELCOM threatened species or the pressures and/or impacts that are causing threats to these species,

8.2 Raise awareness about the HELCOM list of threatened species amongst stakeholders and the general public, and consider to establish a permanent dialogue and exchange of knowledge between HELCOM and relevant stakeholders such as recreational and commercial fishermen, seamen.

RECOMMENDS ALSO that

9. The Contracting Parties will report on their first activities taken to implement this Recommendation in 2018, and thereafter according to the schedule to be agreed by the State & Conservation Working Group with the aim to harmonize reporting intervals and content with EU and other reporting obligations supported by this Recommendation, using an appropriate template to be developed,

10. Based on the progress in implementing this Recommendation and following the next Red List assessment of the Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes in 2019, the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention utilize new knowledge on threatened species to maintain or further improve the status of HELCOM threatened species also beyond 2021.

The Contracting Parties will report on their first activities taken to implement this Recommendation in 2018, and thereafter according to the schedule to be agreed by the State & Conservation Working Group with the aim to harmonize reporting intervals and content with EU and other reporting obligations supported by this Recommendation, using an appropriate template to be developed

Based on the progress in implementing this Recommendation and following the next Red List assessment of the Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes in 2019, the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention utilize new knowledge on threatened species to maintain or further improve the status of HELCOM threatened species also beyond 2021.

Recommendation 40-1 CONSERVATION AND PROTECTION OF MARINE AND COASTAL BIOTOPES, HABITATS AND BIOTOPE COMPLEXES CATEGORIZED AS THREATENED ACCORDING TO THE HELCOM RED LISTS

THE COMMISSION, HAVING REGARD to Article 15 of the 1992 Helsinki Convention and in particular the efforts of the Contracting Parties to conserve and protect biodiversity of marine and coastal areas,

RECALLING the goal of the 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP) to achieve a favourable conservation status of marine biodiversity, and the commitment of the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration to take measures so that by 2020, regionally, the loss of all red listed marine habitats and biotopes in the Baltic Sea will be halted and they have largely recovered, and that degradation and fragmentation have been significantly reduced,

BEING AWARE of the alarming situation for marine biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes in the Baltic Sea area, in particular those being defined as 'Critically Endangered', 'Endangered' or 'Vulnerable' in the 2013 HELCOM Red List (BSEP No. 138), and to those coastal biotopes that were identified in the individual states as 'Heavily Endangered' or 'Immediately Threatened' by 'loss of area' in the 1998 HELCOM Red List (BSEP No. 75), termed threatened (coastal and/or marine) biotopes, habitats and biotopes complexes hereafter,

NOTING that the status of some marine biotopes, habitats and biotopes complexes has deteriorated over

the last 15-20 years.

KNOWING that threatened coastal or marine biotopes, habitats and biotopes complexes are also very important for rare or threatened species,

RECALLING HELCOM lists of threatened and/or declining species and biotopes/habitats in the Baltic Sea Area (BSEP 113), which are in urgent need of protective measures,

RECALLING ALSO HELCOM Recommendations 35/1 'System of coastal and marine Baltic Sea protected areas (HELCOM MPAs), and 37/2 'Conservation of Baltic Sea Species Categorized as Threatened According to the

2013 HELCOM Red List',

FURTHER RECALLING the EU Biodiversity Strategy to 2020 as well as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and the Strategic Action Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and its associated Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in particular Aichi Target 5,

HIGHLIGHTING that HELCOM threatened biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes can be associated, inter alia, with Descriptors 1 and 6 of Annex I of the Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD) and associated criteria in Decision (EU) 2017/848, thus their protection and conservation contributes to the MSFD objective of achieving Good Environmental Status of EU marine waters by 2020, for those Contracting Parties who are also EU Members States

RECOGNIZING that all marine biotope complexes of the 2013 HELCOM Red List, many of them threatened, are also natural habitat types of community interest within Annex I of the EU Habitats Directive (HD) with respective obligations applicable to Contracting Parties who are also EU Member States,

NOTING, however, that the threatened Baltic Sea underwater biotopes and habitats do not fall under the strict protection regime of the HD, since they are not listed in Annex I HD, and therefore protection of threatened Baltic Sea habitats and biotopes may be required beyond the scope of HD in order to achieve the CBD COP 10 Aichi Targets, the 2007 HELCOM Baltic Sea Action Plan (BSAP), the targets of the 2013 HELCOM Copenhagen Ministerial Declaration and for EU Member States the aims of the MSFD and Water Framework Directive (WFD),

BEING AWARE that this Recommendation can support national biotope, biotope complexes and habitat conservation legislation that the Contracting Parties may have,

AIMING at effective protection of HELCOM threatened biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes.

RECOMMENDS to the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention:

1) to protect and conserve threatened marine and coastal biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes, hereafter termed threatened biotopes, habitats and biotopes complexes, in particular those being defined as 'Critically Endangered', 'Endangered' or 'Vulnerable' in the 2013 HELCOM Red List (BSEP No. 138), those coastal biotopes that were identified in the individual states as 'Heavily Endangered' or 'Immediately Threatened' by 'loss of area' in the 1998 HELCOM Red List (BSEP No. 75) and those defined in subsequent revisions of these Red Lists, and which are relevant to their waters.

2) to include in or update their national legislation with provisions that provide protection for specific threatened marine and coastal biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes1 or if considered more appropriate, choose different kinds of existing legal and otherinstruments to provide similar protection such as incentives, administrative actions or negotiated agreements,

3) that those activities that may significantly affect, destroy or damage such threatened biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes should be prohibited or limited. Therefore, in such cases when new plans and projects may significantly affect the threatened biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes, they should be evaluated in an EIA or similar procedure, in accordance with national legislation, and hereby be mapped by the applicant if such maps do not already exist for the planning area,

4) that derogations from such prohibitions shall only be granted for activities of significant public interest or when the negative impacts can be remedied by appropriate mitigation or compensation measures for the benefit of nature conservation,

5) that threatened biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes, if feasible, be identified and mapped preferably by using the HELCOM HUB classification system for underwater biotopes and appropriate classification systems for coastal biotopes such as the HELCOM classification system in BSEP No. 75 in order to support general management of human activities and maritime spatial planning based on the ecosystem approach,

6) to make an inventory of existing and planned national and regional conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans as well as other relevant programmes and measures for the protection of threatened underwater biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes,

7) to review by 2018 the effectiveness of conservation-, recovery- or action plans or related activities with main focus on the cause of changes and the effect of activities, and based on these:

7.1. determine what, if any, additional activities are needed to mitigate the identified pressures and/or impacts and develop or amend conservation-, recovery- and/or action plans for HELCOM threatened biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes. Where appropriate, the development could be carried out in cooperation with neighboring countries and/or relevant organizations,

7.2. aim to implement such plans or activities as soon as possible, and by 2021 at the latest,

8) to consider whether any sites justify selection as new or expanded MPAs for the conservation of HELCOM threatened marine biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes,

9) to encourage other international organizations or bodies to promote and strive for taking all appropriate measures in areas of their specific competence, such as in fisheries management or shipping, in order to reduce pressures and impacts on HELCOM threatened marine biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes,

10) to monitor, as far as possible, the range, spatial coverage as well as structure and function of HELCOM threatened marine biotopes, habitats or biotope complexes and the pressures and/or impacts that cause threats to them, and to improve the exchange of respective data with HELCOM and other international and national bodies in order to create synergies,

11) to raise awareness about the HELCOM Red list of threatened marine biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes amongst stakeholders and the general public, and consider to establish a permanent dialogue and exchange of knowledge between HELCOM and relevant stakeholders, such as recreational and commercial fishermen.

12) for those Contracting Parties being also EU Member States, to ensure that the implementation of this Recommendation is consistent with the implementation of relevant EU regulations, in particular HabitatsDirective (HD, 92/43/EEC), Birds Directive (2009/147/EC), Marine Strategy Framework Directive (MSFD, 2008/56/EC), Water Framework Directive (WFD, 2000/60/EC), EU Directive establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning (2014/89/EU) and the Common Fisheries Policy.

RECOMMENDS ALSO that

13) the Contracting Parties will report on their first activities taken to implement this Recommendation in 2019, and thereafter according to the schedule to be agreed by the State and Conservation Working Group with the aim to harmonize reporting intervals and content with EU and other reporting obligations supported by this Recommendation, using an appropriate template to be developed,

14) based on the progress in implementing this Recommendation and following the next Red List assessment of the Baltic Sea species and habitats/biotopes/biotope complexes, the Governments of the Contracting Parties to the Helsinki Convention utilize new knowledge on threatened marine biotopes, habitats and biotope complexes to maintain or further improve their status also beyond 2021.

Annex 2: Updated and refined IUCN information available

As a number of new or updated information has been made available from the IUCN since the work on the previous HELCOM Red List of species took place, there is a need to revisit the results of the earlier process. This, however, presents some challenges with regards to assessing only certain species on the current list as the species presented after the review would then consist of both outdated, non-reviewed species following the previous guidelines, and species assessed according to the latest, most up-to-date guidelines. Part of the work planned under the Red List review would be set aside time to study the revised IUCN guidelines, "translate" them into a HELCOM context and get acceptance for this. This would be done in an effort to avoid the issues experienced tin the previous iteration of the HELCOM Red listing process, where the understanding between the IUCN guidelines and regional need was not clear-cut. A selection of information updated by the IUCN since the latest HELCOM Red List of species assessment process can be found below.

- ***Guidelines for Using the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria.*** *The Red List Guidelines document is regularly updated: the current version is version 14 (August 2019).* Available in English
- ***Documentation Standards and Consistency Checks for IUCN Red List Assessments and Species Accounts.*** Available in English. *This document is regularly updated: the current version is version 2 (September 2013).*
- ***Revised Rules of Procedure: IUCN Red List assessment process 2021-2024.*** Available in 2021.
- ***Guidelines for Application of IUCN Red List Criteria at Regional and National Levels. Version 4.0.*** Available in English
- ***Mapping Standards and Data Quality for IUCN Red List Spatial Data.*** Available in English
- ***Extinction assessment tools***
- ***GIS Tools, Software and Recommended Base data***
- ***Taxonomic Sources***
- ***Guidelines for the application of IUCN Red List of Ecosystems categories and criteria.*** *The Red List Guidelines document is regularly updated: the current version is version 1.1 (2017).* Available in English

Annex 3: Extracts from relevant meeting outcomes

Relevant extracts from STATE & CONSERVATION 13-2020:

The meeting took note of the plan for updating of the HELCOM Red List, tentatively planned to start in 2022 and to be available by the end of 2024. The meeting clarified that the Red List work will consist of assessments for both on species and habitats/biotopes.

The meeting welcomed the information that Sweden will explore the possibility to utilize the Swedish red list assessment support tool for regional purposes.

The meeting welcomed the information that IUCN has prepared an R-package as a tool to support red list assessments and that this is publicly available and supported that functionality of this tool also be explored.

The meeting agreed to prepare a HELCOM Red List project proposal, including resource estimates, for consideration and approval at HOD 60-2021 and invited the Secretariat to inform HOD 59-2020 of the current plan.

Relevant extracts from STATE&CONSERVATION 14-2021:

The meeting considered the draft project description for reviewing the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II), 2022-2024, as presented by the Secretariat. The meeting acknowledged that in order to meet the target year of 2024, the project would need to start in 2022.

The meeting generally supported the project proposal, noting the following comments:

- biotope assessment description could be improved by adding further detail to the project plan e.g by splitting the assessment into parts, similarly to what has been done for species
- how to approach the use of criteria C and D of the IUCN guidance for biotope assessment would benefit from further consideration
- timeline constraints due to the same national experts being involved with HOLAS III and MSFD reporting
- the term seabirds in the proposal should be changed to waterbirds to account for the fact that the assessment also covers sea ducks in order to cover a wider range of bird species, e.g. sea ducks.

The meeting invited the Secretariat to collaborate with Finland in order to improve the proposal with regards to the assessment of habitats and biotopes.

The meeting supported the establishment of Task Teams and acknowledged that expertise for such teams could be sourced from the national representatives to the relevant expert groups. The meeting highlighted the need for clear leads for the work.

The meeting took note of the information by Sweden that national processes are ongoing regarding the possibility to use the Swedish Red listing tool hosted by the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences (SLU) for HELCOM assessments and that Sweden will contact the Secretariat with further information on progress.

The meeting took note that currently no financing has been secured for the project and invited CPs to consider contributing funds to ensure that the project is realized. The meeting welcomed that Sweden is exploring the possibility to secure partial financing for the work and will clarify their position either before or at HOD 60-2021.

The meeting agreed that the proposal will be submitted to HOD 60-2021 for review and acknowledged that final approval would need to be received by HOD 61-2021 in December for the project to take place. The

meeting invited the Secretariat to prepare an information document to support the project proposal for HOD, to the extent possible outlining the expected tasks of national experts, to support the CPs to better assess the associated workload on the national level.

Following STATE&CONSERVATION 14-2021 the Secretariat has, with assistance from Finland, endeavored to amend the project description to account for the input provided by the State & Conservation WG. A separate information document, as outlined above, will be prepared to support the project description.

Relevant extracts from HOD 60-2021 outcome
The meeting considered the draft project description for reviewing and updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II, 2022-2024) (document 5-21) and the foreseen expert participation in the HELCOM RED LIST II project (document 5-24).

The meeting highlighted the importance of the work, however also expressed concern regarding the workload and availability of national experts and took note of the comments by Finland that as far as possible existing HELCOM groups should be utilized for the work.

The meeting took note that at this time Contracting Parties are not in a position to provide additional financing to secure the work, invited the Secretariat to continue exploring possible financing of the work, and provisionally approved the use of HELCOM funds to finance the planned work, should these be available. The meeting agreed to come back to the question of financing the work at HOD 61-2021.

The meeting provisionally approved the draft project, pending securing funding of the work, and invited the Secretariat and the State and Conservation Working Group to further elaborate the project description with the aim of submitting a finalized draft to HOD 61-2021 for final approval.

Relevant extracts from STATE & CONSERVATION 15-2021
The meeting welcomed that full funding for the project has been secured from the HELCOM budget.

The meeting noted that HOD 60-2021 provisionally approved the draft project for reviewing and updating the HELCOM Red List of species and habitats/biotopes (HELCOM RED LIST II, 2022-2024), pending securing funding of the work, and invited the Secretariat and the State and Conservation Working Group to further elaborate the project description with the aim of submitting a finalized draft to HOD 61-2021 for final approval.

The meeting welcomed the Swedish presentation and clarification on the national red list assessment tool Edit (presentation 16).

The meeting noted that this tool is intended to be used for the species assessment to get preliminary results which are then to be reviewed, and as needed revised, by experts in the red list project teams at the outlined dedicated workshops. The possibility to translate the tool is being explored with Sweden and SLU. Information available from previous assessment can be reviewed and reused in the tool. The meeting further noted the need to include AOO and EOO in the calculations and welcomed that the Secretariat is looking into developing such a tool with full Baltic Sea spatial coverage, utilizing the species observational data in the biodiversity database.

The meeting further noted that expert opinion can be used as reference in the tool and that the tool doesn't require filling in information under all criteria in order to produce an assessment result.

The meeting invited the Secretariat to explore whether it would be possible to expand the functionality of the BalMar tool to include automated processing of habitat and species data into HUB categories.

The meeting considered the further elaborated project description (document 3J-84) and endorsed it to be submitted to HOD 61-2021 for final approval.